

*The noble with the base complies,
The sot assumes the rule of wit,
And cowards make the brave submit.*

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THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA.

By PETER KROPOTKIN.

THE Russian Revolution has lately entered into a new phase. Dark gloom hung about the country during the months of January to April. Now it is all bright hopes owing to the unexpected results of the Duma elections all turning in favor of the Radicals. But before speaking of the new hopes, let us cast a glance on that terrible gloomy period which the country has just lived through.

In every revolution a number of local uprisings is always required to prepare the great successful effort of the people. So it has been in Russia. We have had the local uprisings at Moscow, in the Baltic provinces, in the Caucasus and in the villages of Central Russia. And each of these uprisings, remaining local, was followed by a terrible repression.

The General Strike, declared at Moscow in January last, did not succeed. The working men had suffered too much during the great General Strike in October, 1905, and the partial strikes which followed. And when the provocations of the Government compelled the Moscow workmen to strike, the movement did not generalize. Only a few factories on the Presnya and a few railway lines joined it. The Grand Trunk—Moscow to St. Petersburg—continued to work, and troops were brought on it to Moscow.

As to the troops stationed at Moscow itself they showed signs of deep discontent, and probably would have sided with the people if the strike had been general and a crowd of 300,000 workmen had flooded the streets, as they did flood in October last. But when they saw that the General Strike had failed they obeyed their commanders.

And yet the week during which a handful of armed revolutionists—less than 2,000—and the workers on strike in the Presnya fought against the artillery and the soldiers, and when several miles of barricades were built by the crowd—by the man and the boy in the street—

this week proved how wrong were all the "fire-side revolutionists" when they proclaimed the impossibility of street warfare in a revolution.

As to the Letts and the Esthonians in the Baltic provinces, their uprising against their haughty and rapacious German landlords was a great movement. All over a large country the peasants and the artisans of the small towns rose up. They nominated their own municipalities, they sent away the German judges, refused to work for the landlords, paid no rents,—proceeded in short as if they were free. And if their uprising was finally drowned in blood, it has shown at least what the peasants must do all over Russia. In fact the latent insurrection continues still.

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The repression which followed the uprising was terrible. The British press has not told one-tenth of the atrocities which were committed by the imperial troops in the Baltic provinces, along the Moscow to Kazan railway line, in the Caucasus, in Siberia, or in the Russian villages. And when we tried to tell the truth about these atrocities, either in some widely read English review, or before large public meetings, we always felt the dead wall of some inexplicable opposition rising against us. The treaty or agreement which has been concluded a few days ago between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia explains now the cause of the opposition to the divulcation in this country of facts which were openly published in the Russian papers, in Russia itself.

The repression was a story of a wholesale murder, accomplished by the troops systematically, in cold blood. Modern history knows only one similarly savage repression: the wholesale murders by the middle-class army at Paris after the defeat of the Commune, in May, 1871. And yet these murders were committed after a fierce fight, in the lurid light of burning Paris.

The detachment of the guard which was sent along the Moscow-Kazan line had not one single shot fired against it. The revolutionists had already left the line and disbanded when that regiment came. But at every station Colonel Minn, head of this detachment, and his officers shot from ten to thirty men, simply taking their names from lists supplied to the troops by the secret police.

They shot them without any simulation of a trial, or even of identification. They shot them in batches, without any warning. Shot anyhow, from behind, into the heap. Colonel Minn shot them simply with his revolver.

As to the peasants in the Baltic provinces it was still worse. Whole villages were flogged. Those men whom a local landlord would name as "dangerous" were shot on the spot, without any further inquiries—very often a son for his father, one brother for another, an Ivanovsky for an Ivanitsky. . . . It was such an orgy of flogging and killing that a young officer, having himself executed several men in this way, shot himself next day when he realized what he had done.

In Siberia, in the Caucasus, the horrors were even more revolting. And in the villages of Russia, where the peasants had shown signs of unrest, the same executions went on, sometimes with an unimaginable cruelty, as was, for instance, the case in Tamboff, with that governor's aid, Luzhenovsky, whom the heroic girl Spiridonova killed. "When I came to the villages and saw the old men who had grown insane after having been tortured under the whips, and when I had spoken to the mother of the girl who had flung herself into the well after the Cossacks had violated her, I felt that life was impossible so long as that man, Luzhenovsky, would go on unpunished." Thus spoke this heroic girl on her trial.

But worse than that was in store. All the world has shuddered when it learned the tortures to which Miss Spiridonova was submitted by the police officer Zhdanoff and the Cossack officer Abramoff after her arrest. The tortures of our Montjuich comrades and brothers fade before the sufferings which were inflicted upon this girl. And all over Russia there was lately a sigh of satisfaction when that Abramoff was killed and the revolutionist who killed that beast made his escape, and again the other day when it was known that the other beast, Zhdanoff, had met the same fate.

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The gloominess which prevailed in Russia when the Witte-Durnovo ministry had inaugurated the wholesale shooting of the rebels could not be described without quoting pages from the Russian newspapers. Over 70,-

000 people were arrested; the prisons were full to overflowing. Batches of exiles began to be sent, as of old, by mere order of the Administration, to Siberia. The old exiles, returning under the amnesty of November 2, 1905, meeting on their way home the batches of the Witte-Durnovo exiles. The revolutionists of all sections of the Socialist party, Revolutionary Socialists, Anarchists, and even Social Democrats, took to revolver and bomb, and every day one could read in the Russian papers that one, two, or more functionaries of the Crown had been killed by the revolutionists in revenge for the atrocities they had committed. Scores of men and women, like Spiridonova, the sisters Izmailovitch, and so many other heroic women and young men, felt sick of life under such a system of Asiatic rule, and made the vow of taking revenge upon the executioners.

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It was under such conditions that the elections to the Duma took place. And now the few supporters of the Tsar had to discover that their satraps had overdone the oppression. Various measures were taken by the Government to manipulate the elections so as to have a crushing majority in their favor. The Liberal candidates were arrested, the meetings forbidden, the newspapers confiscated—every governor of a province acting as a Persian satrape on his own responsibility. Those who spoke or went about for the advanced candidates were most unceremoniously searched and sent to jail. . . . And all that was—labor lost!

The reaction had developed within these three months such a bitter hatred against the Government that none but opposition candidates had any chance of being listened to and elected. "Are you against these wild beasts or for them?" This was the only question that was asked.

And the Constitutional Democrats obtained a crushing majority in the Duma (pronounce Dooma), such a majority that the Russian Government is now perplexed as to what is to be done next.

The Revolutionary Socialists and the Social Democrats abstained from taking any part in the elections, and therefore there are very few avowed Socialists in the Duma.

But apart from that the Duma contains all those middle-class Radicals whose names have come to the front during the last thirty years as foes of autocracy.

The most interesting element in the Duma are the peasants, who have nearly 120 representatives elected. With the exception of some thirty men, who are of unsettled opinion, the peasant representatives are absolutely and entirely with the most advanced Radicals in political matters, and with the Socialist workingmen in all the labor demands. But, in addition to that, they put forward the great question—the greatest of our century—the land question.

“No one who does not till the land himself has any right to the land. Only those who work on it with their own hands, and every one of those who does so, must have access to the land. The land is the nation’s property, and the nation must dispose of it according to its needs.” This is their opinion—their faith, and no economists of any camp will shake it.

“Eighty years ago we were settled in these prairies,” one of those peasants said the other day. That land was a desert. “We have made the value of all this region; but half of it was taken by the landlords (in accordance with the law, of course; but we, peasants, do not admit that a law could be a law once it is unjust). It was taken by the landlords—we must have it back.”

“But if you take that land, and there are other villages in the neighborhood which have no land but their poor allotments, what then?”

“Then they have a right to it, just as we have. But not the landlords!”

There is all the Social Question, all the Socialist wisdom, in these plain words.

“If the peasants seize the land, then the factory hands will apply the same reasoning to the factories!” exclaim the terrified correspondents of the English papers in reporting such plain talk.

Yes, they will. Undoubtedly they will. They must. Because, if they don’t do it all our civilization must go to wreck and ruin—like the Roman, the Greek, the Egyptian, the Babylonian civilizations went to the ground.

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Another important feature. The Russian peasants don't trust their representatives. These men from the plough have understood the gist of parliamentarism better than those who have grown infected gradually by Parliament worship. Their election fell upon this or that man; but they knew they must not trust him. Election is somewhat of a piece of gambling. And therefore a number of private peasant delegates are now seen in the galleries of the Russian Duma, whom their villages have sent *to keep watch over their representatives in Parliament*. They know that these representatives will soon be spoiled and bribed one way or another. So they sent delegates—mostly old, respected peasants, not fine in words, not of the self-advertising class, men who never would be elected, but who will honestly keep their eye upon the M.P.'s.

However, although the Duma has been only a few days together, a general feeling grows in Russia that all this electioneering is not yet the proper thing. "What can the Duma do?" they ask all over Russia. "If the Government doesn't want it they will send it away. How can 500 men resist the Government if they make up their minds to send them back to their homes?"

And so, all over Russia the feeling grows that the Parliament and its debates are not the right thing yet. It is only a preliminary to something else which is to come. "They will express our needs; they will agree upon certain things" . . . but a feeling grows in Russia that *the action* will have to come from the people.

And the underground work, the slow work of maturing convictions and of grouping together, goes on all over Russia as a preparation to something infinitely more important than all the debates of the Duma.

They don't even pronounce the name of this more important thing. Perhaps most of them don't know its name. But we know it and we may tell it. *It is the Revolution: the only real remedy for the redress of wrongs.*

